

newspaper, "La Re"publique Frangaise," added in its next issue such choice epithets as: " Cowards, incapables, prostitutes' bullies, jail-birds, and pot-house loafers." All who might not vote for the great man having been thus stigmatised in advance, it might be assumed when Gambetta, in lieu of his usual great majority, polled only 9,404 votes against 8,799, that about half the electorate was given over to drink, crime, and depravity. Taking this as his text Zola wrote as follows:

" The figures on either side are nearly equal, so it is established that at Belleville and Charonne one of every two citizens is never sober. . . . Yes, one half of the masses is composed of brawlers, drunkards, and cowards. M. Gambetta said to them: ' We will see which side is the most numerous'; and they have seen. Of 20,000 citizens 10,000 are drunken slaves . . . 10,000 drunken slaves ! The figures make me thoughtful. I remember a novelist who wrote a novel called 'L'Assommoir.' It was a conscientious study of the ravages caused by drink among the working classes of Paris. It was instinct with pity and affection, it solicited mercy for womanhood and for childhood, it showed labour vanquished by sloth and alcohol, it begged for air and light and instruction for the unhappy poor, more social comfort, and less political agitation. Now do you know in what fashion M. Gambetta's friends and newspapers greeted that book? They denounced it as an evil action, a crime. They dragged its author through the mire. . . . Pamphlets did not

suffice them, they  
even delivered lectures, and declared  
publicly that the author  
had insulted the people of Paris. They  
would have hanged him  
had they been able, in the hope that by  
so doing they might  
secure a hundred additional votes at the  
next elections. Yes, it  
was so. M. Gambetta's friends and  
newspapers were then all  
tenderness for the people. M. Gambetta  
had invariably secured  
a large majority at Belleville, and it was  
consequently impossible  
that there could be a single tippler among  
those who dwelt on  
the sacred mount of the democracy . . .  
What! a paltry novelist